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ABSTRACT

About 150 educators, administrators, and officials of public and private educational agencies took part in three days of discussions that focused on equal opportunity and the related issues of: (1) access, placement, and retention; (2) black colleges; (3) standardized tests; (4) needed change in white attitudes; (5) open admissions; (6) alternatives to admission testing; (7) access and recommendations for increased access to graduate and professional school; (8) access to private education; (9) educational finance and equal opportunity. Recommendations were made. Participants to the conference took away new resources to help solve the problems and resolve the conflicts surrounding the issue of equal educational opportunity. (Author/KE)

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A Report
from the Conference on

EQUALITY OF ACCESS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

By John Egerton

HE007242

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The Southern Education Foundation in Atlanta and the Ford Foundation in New York have worked cooperatively over the past ten years on a number of projects having to do with higher education and race. In these joint ventures, Ford's resources and creative philanthropic planning have been complemented by SEF's regional orientation and its ties to state and local programs and institutions.

The Conference on Equality of Access in Higher Education was a continuation of an effort SEF began several years ago to contribute to the achievement of equal educational opportunity for blacks and other minorities in the colleges and universities of the South and the Nation. Within the past year, the Foundation has published "Ending Discrimination in Higher Education," a report on the legal search for equal educational opportunity, and has brought together for the first time the black officials who serve on governing boards of public colleges and universities in the South. This report on the Access conference will be followed by publication of several monographs based on papers presented there, as the Foundation continues to address the problems of discrimination and inequality in higher education.

REASONS FOR THE CONFERENCE

For the past decade—since the middle of the 1960s—a multiplicity of public and private initiatives has been launched to rectify pervasive conditions of segregation and inequality in American higher education.

At the federal level, new legislation has provided financial aid for students, established special supportive service programs, and given direct aid to developing institutions. In the courts, judicial remedies for discrimination have been attempted—notably in the singularly significant *Adams v. Richardson* case. In several states both in and out of the South, the combination of court action, private pressure, and official effort has led to some desegregation of formerly all-white colleges and universities and some strengthening of historically black institutions. And finally, the contributions of planners and researchers in governmental and independent agencies and in the extended network of public and private higher education institutions have begun to produce the essential body of information upon which policies and programs of equal educational opportunity can be built. Evidence of change can be found in the wake of this period of ferment and conflict.

Underlying these manifold developments was an implicit assumption: that American institutions, with their vast resources, could become more flexible and open and equitable, that they could expand and enlarge the meaningful participation of blacks and other minorities, that they would come to reflect in their totality the national ideals and principles of equality and diversity.

In a period of economic expansion and national growth, the objective of equity seemed within the reach of the nation's colleges and universities, and it was possible to anticipate the achievement of it with some optimism.

But times have changed. The period of expansion has become a period of retrenchment, and amidst the preoccupations with tight money and cutbacks and limits on growth, the drive for racial and socio-economic equality of opportunity has been stalled. Among those who have worked for the attainment of equity within the system of existing institutions, the deferral of rights has prompted a mood of weariness and cynicism. The evidence indicates that resistance to equality not only persists, but may be growing stronger with the intensified competition for limited resources. There is, furthermore, some confusion and disagreement over basic priorities and strategies in the struggle for equal rights, and while the goals and objectives remain clear, the means of achieving them are less so.

In 1974, the Southern Education Foundation convened a meeting of educators and others concerned with the problems of inequality in higher education. At that time, the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare had accepted the desegregation plans of eight state systems of higher education, submitted under orders of a federal court in the *Adams v. Richardson* litigation. The subsequent performance of the states in implementing the plans has been deemed unsatisfactory by the Legal Defense Fund and the law firm of Rauh and Silard, represent-

g the plaintiffs in the case, and rther court proceedings are ex-ected.

ROBLEM AREAS IDENTIFIED

t was in this atmosphere of un-chieved objectives that the 1975 Conference on Equality of Access n Postsecondary Education was convened. In preparation for the meeting, the Southern Education Foundation commissioned several papers on various aspects of the equality issue, and had its own staff assemble statistical data to illustrate several problem areas. Included in the information gathered by the SEF staff were these findings:

1. The proportion of blacks among college-age persons in the United States is 12 percent, but blacks actually go to college at a rate of only 7 or 8 percent. Of all American youths 18 to 21 years old in 1973, one-third of the whites but only one-fifth of the blacks were enrolled in college.

2. The percentage of blacks entering college as full-time freshmen declined from 8.7 percent of the total freshman class in 1972 to 7.4 percent in 1974.

3. The proportion of blacks in the college-age population in the South is almost 20 percent, but the 1974 enrollment of freshmen in those states was only 14 percent, and in previously segregated white institutions, blacks made up only 5.4 percent of the freshman class.

4. In the United States as a whole, more black students attended formerly all-white colleges and universities than historically black institutions. In the South, the opposite is true: the public black colleges enroll almost twice as many blacks as the public white ones, and there are more than six times as many black students in private black institutions as there are in private white ones.

5. Southern states are generally behind the national average in the percentage of their young people graduating from high school, and in the percentage of their high school graduates who attend college. Almost 77 percent of the nation's ninth-graders in the fall of 1969 graduated from high school in 1973; in the South, the highest comparable percentage was in Virginia (74.6) and the lowest was in Mississippi (56.2). Of all the nation's 18-to-24-year-olds in 1972, more than 36 percent were enrolled in college, while in the South, no state had as much as one-third of its college-age population in school.

6. Between 1958 and 1973, the cost of attending a public college increased by 87 percent. Currently, typical costs of attending college in the South range between 20 and 25 percent of the region's median family income level. A family with two children is said to need an annual income of at least $12,000 to be able to afford the cost of college, yet only one-third of all students in Southern colleges come from families with that much income.

7. Poor families enroll their children in college at a much lower rate than do wealthier families, and their ability to do so has not increased, in spite of expressed national commitments to equal opportunity. From the family income bracket of $5,000

If equal educational opportunity is now an accepted principle in American society, it is still not an established practice.

a year or less, only about one in every seven 18-to-24-year-olds attended college in 1974; at the same time, more than half of the college-age members of families earning $15,000 or more were enrolled. Furthermore, a smaller percentage from the lowest income group was in college in 1973 than in 1967.

8. Low-income students are far more likely to attend inexpensive two-year colleges than wealthier students, and they are far less likely to complete an undergraduate degree. And at every income level, more whites than blacks attend college. In the Southern States, where the median income of black families is only slightly more than half as high as that of white families, the effect on college enrollment is readily apparent.

9. Southern states traditionally have provided very little direct student aid for their college-age populations. Until 1974, Florida and Tennessee were the only Southern states which had any significant across-the-board need-based grant program. Federal appropriations for student aid have increased dramatically in recent years, and the Southern states in general and minority and low-income students in particular have benefitted from these programs.

ACCESS, PLACEMENT AND RETENTION

In a conference background paper on access, placement, retention, and graduation of minority students in higher education, Cameron Fincher of the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia provided further evidence to show that public policy concerning equality of educational opportunity has changed gradually in the past 20 years, but still lacks clarity and cohesion. If equal educational opportunity is now an accepted principle in American society, it is still not an established practice.

On the matter of access, Fincher noted the inconsistency and incompleteness of available data, but drew on what is available to show that the black percentage of the college population crept upward from less than 5 percent in the 1960s to about 6 percent in 1970 and approximately 7 percent in 1974. One inference which can be drawn from the available statistics can be stated roughly as follows: Of every 100 white 18-year-olds in the United States, about 75 finish high school, about 45 enter college, and about 15 earn a baccalaureate degree; to every 100 black 18-year-olds, about 65 finish high

school, approximately 30 enter college, and only about 5 earn a degree. Clearly, there is no parity or equal access to higher education for blacks.

With regard to placement, Fincher showed that more blacks enter public two-year colleges than all other types of institutions combined, and that a disproportionately high percentage of black students at all levels of study are enrolled in education and the social sciences—two fields in which heavy enrollment has resulted in an oversupply of graduates.

FEWER BLACKS THAN WHITES FINISH COLLEGE

The statistics which show that a far higher percentage of blacks than whites who enter college do not finish led Fincher to several conclusions:

1. "There is very little in the data to suggest that institutions of higher education are effectively geared for the education of minority groups and are efficiently processing minority-group graduates for the nation's manpower needs."

2. "Arrangements such as reduced coursework, non-credit remedial courses, and summer pre-admission programs have not only increased the expenses of a college education for students who cannot afford it, but they have intensified feelings of rejection or inadequacy that many disadvantaged students already had."

3. Numerous barriers prevent low-income and minority-group students from entering and completing college with as much proportional frequency as middle- and upper-income whites. Among the barriers are admissions standards and standardized aptitude tests, lack of money, poor elementary and high school preparation, and a general inflexibility among colleges and universities in the face of diverse student needs.

BLACK COLLEGES

The black institutions, Fincher noted, remain the major source of black college graduates who become Ph.D.'s, army officers, federal judges, and physicians. In spite of serious underfinancing, the historic role of black colleges and universities has not diminished. Fincher wrote; it "remains what it has been—the provision of opportunities and experiences that cannot be duplicated elsewhere. They remain unique institutions in a nation that has not yet fully understood the meaning of pluralism and diversity." And ironically, the future of many traditionally

". . . public policy is geared to the advancement of individuals, to the detriment of groups, and the resulting gains have been too small to alter conditions for the black population as a whole."
—Benjamin F. Payton

black institutions is now clouded by the lack of a clear public policy on the meaning of equal educational opportunity.

STANDARDIZED TESTS

In the area of standardized tests, Fincher identified several points of controversy:

1. The possibility that standardized tests and measurements are inherently biased against minority groups;

2. The lack of consensus concerning whether tests should be used primarily for placement and guidance, and no longer used as a primary tool of selective access;

3. A confusion of goals in the use of tests, principally between those whose interest is in evaluating the education students have received and those who want simply to evaluate the students themselves;

4. The fears of parents and students that test data will not be treated confidentially, that students will be misclassified and miseducated because of faulty test data, that schools will acquire poor reputations because of test scores, and that tests will result in a perpetuation of discrimination.

THE CONFERENCE

About 150 educators, administrators, and officials of public and private educational agencies took part in the three days of discussions that focused on these and other equal opportunity issues. If there was agreement among them on the general objective of attaining equity for blacks and other minorities in higher education—and clearly, there *was* consensus on that—the conferees represented a diversity of viewpoints on matters of priority and strategy. The variety of interests and talents they brought to the meeting enlivened the debate on such issues as open admissions, testing, recruitment, retention, and student financial aid.

Benjamin F. Payton, the Ford Foundation's chief administrative officer for higher education and minority affairs, set the tone for the discussions in his opening remarks. Blacks who manage to negotiate the obstacle course through college may find greater opportunity ahead of them than ever, he said, but those who do not complete the race may face greater peril than ever before. The new limitations on finances and the continuing struggle for equality have resulted in a depression of spirit as well as of the economy, and Payton cited the "prevailing lack of sen-

". . . the system's 'highly refined institutional status hierarchy' makes the concept of equal access more of a myth than a reality."—*Alexander W. Astin*

sitivity on the part of white faculty and administrators" and the "corrosive mood of cynicism among black students" as evidence of the double depression.

CHANGE IN WHITE ATTITUDES NEEDED

Payton noted that in the U. S. Office of Education, where the pressure of the *Adams v. Richardson* case is focused, there is "a frantic search for politically and socially acceptable ways to deal with the issue of equality," yet public policy is geared to the advancement of individuals, to the detriment of groups, and the resulting gains have been too small to alter conditions for the black population as a whole. These piecemeal gains, he said, have not been accompained by a fundamental change in white attitudes, and he gave several illustrations in support of that assertion: the lack of involvement of senior white faculty members with the problems facing newly-arrived black students and faculty, the failure of white institutions to honor commitments to equality by redeploying resources and altering priorities, the ineffectiveness of many support programs intended to assist minority and low-income students, the growing threat to the survival of black colleges, and the prevailing mindset that considers a white institution with a 5 percent black enrollment as "integrated" while a black institution with a 45 percent white faculty is still thought of as "segregated."

The notion expressed by Payton that public policy is geared to the advancement of individuals was reinforced by the presentation of Alexander W. Astin, president of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California-Los Angeles. This nation's postsecondary educational system—the most accessible in the world—does indeed allow almost anybody to enroll in *some* kind of institution, Astin said, but the system's "highly refined institutional status hierarchy" makes the concept of equal access more of a myth than a reality. By dividing all public colleges and universities into seven categories based roughly on their levels of selectivity in admissions, with open-admission junior colleges at the bottom and highly selective universities at the top, he showed that:

1. Nearly half of the new students in public institutions enter the junior colleges, while less than 10 percent enter the top universities;

2. Two of every 10 junior college

"The real issue is not who goes to college, but who goes to college where."—*Alexander Astin*

students and seven of every 10 selective university students made high grades in high school;

3. The junior colleges enroll more than twice as high a percentage of minority students as the top universities, and the median parental income of junior college students is only two-thirds that of selective university students;

4. Per-student expenditures for educational and general operations, buildings and equipment, libraries, and faculty salaries are consistently and significantly higher at each step in the progression from junior colleges to selective universities, with the top schools spending three times as much for operations, facilities, and libraries as the bottom ones, and an average of almost $5,000 more per person for faculty salaries;

5. Nearly all students in selective universities live in campus housing, while nine of every 10 junior college students commute;

6. The most selective institutions invest more than five times as much as the least selective ones in financial aid per student, and further subsidize each student's educational costs with an investment more than four times greater than that provided for junior college students.

The real issue, said Astin, is not who goes to college, but who goes to college *where*. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, the greatest expenditures of tax dollars in higher education are concentrated on the fewest numbers of students in a hierarchical pyramid that is the exact opposite of equal opportunity.

Astin noted that a number of "elaborate educational rationales" have been presented in defense of this system, but he suggested that the real reasons for it may have more to do with competition and status than with education; university professors support selective admissions because high achievers are "more fun and easier to teach"; bright students enhance the prestige of an institution; highly motivated and talented students almost guarantee distinguished and possibly wealthy alumni in years to come; any relaxation of admissions standards might lower an institution's academic standards. To these arguments, Astin offered a rebuttal:

If one accepts the idea that colleges exist in order to educate, *then the model of selective admissions based on test scores and prior*

grades makes little sense. If an institution exists to educate students, then its mission is to produce certain desirable changes in students or, more simply, to make a difference in the student's life. This kind of "value added" approach to the goals of higher education suggests that admissions procedures should be designed to select students who are likely to be influenced *by the educational process, regardless of the student's entering level of performance. Instead, admissions officers in selective institutions function more like race track handicappers: they try merely to pick winners.*

Instead of simply predicting the performance of students, Astin said, educational institutions have the responsibility to improve their performance. "The mission of the college is *not* simply to maximize its output of distinguished alumni by enrolling as many talented students as possible. Such a static process reduces the college to a kind of funnel: what comes out is purely a matter of what goes in. Colleges and other educational institutions exist in order to change the student, to contribute to personal development, to make a difference." Test scores and prior grades may indeed predict performance in college, he said, but the prediction may be irrelevant to the educational process, having little if anything to do with whether or not the student benefits from the college experience.

In Astin's view, the system of inequality by design which prevails in public higher education discriminates against minorities, low-income students, "late bloomers," and others who are not favored by the established procedures of sorting and selecting. Because the nation lacks "a real consensus as to the *goals* of higher education," and because "most people like these hierarchical systems the way they are," and because "meritocratic values are so deeply entrenched in our social and educational thinking that most of us are inclined to take for granted the elitist nature of our educational structure," effective challenges to the existing system have not been forthcoming, and will be difficult to bring about in any event. But, he added, hierarchical systems based on selective admissions are "neither inevitable nor necessarily even rational," and alternative systems are possible—one of them being Astin's "value added" concept, by which equal access could be made more of a reality and less of a myth.

Attempts to modify the institutional status hierarchy which typifies

". . . carefully planned programs of tutoring, counseling, and other forms of individual assistance have helped many well-motivated students to increase their reading ability from seventh-grade level to 12th-grade level in one year . . ."
—A conference participant

state systems of higher education have included open admissions programs, some alternatives to admissions testing, and special support programs aimed at reducing attrition of minority and low-income students. Three separate workshop sessions of the Conference on Equality of Access were devoted to these areas of concern.

OPEN ADMISSIONS

The presentation of a case study on open admissions at the City University of New York was made by Robert Young, director of special programs of the city's Board of Higher Education. Both Young and James E. Blackwell, chairman of the sociology department at the University of Massachusetts, who directed the workshop on retention, emphasized the essential requirements of adequate funding, extensive advance planning, and continuous evaluation in the operation of open admissions and student supportive service programs. Both also noted that fiscal constraints, the meritocratic mindset, and an apparently diminishing interest in racial and socio-economic equality of opportunity threaten to erode and perhaps even to destroy many of the programs that have been developed in recent years to make colleges more equalitarian institutions.

Most programs of open admissions and supportive services have faced—and continue to face—an uphill fight to become firmly established in the institutional structure. One workshop participant, noting the "blame-the-victim mentality" which penalizes minorities and the poor for failing to adopt white middle-class standards of quality and value, expressed the pessimistic view that predominantly white institutions are incapable of the kinds of fundamental changes that would make them equitable and culturally diverse centers of learning. Another speaker asserted that painstaking research that would support the workability and effectiveness of well-designed equity programs is not being done by most universities "because the findings would demolish their defense of elitism and meritocracy." In illustration of that view, it was pointed out that carefully planned programs of tutoring, counseling, and other forms of individual assistance have helped many well-motivated students to increase their reading ability from seventh-grade level to 12th-grade level in one year—but the belief persists among traditional academicians that students who cannot read well cannot be helped, and that their inability to

If some means of selection is unavoidable, how in a democracy do you sort people without undermining human and constitutional rights—and who should do the sorting?"—*Jean Fairfax*

perform prescribed tasks is entirely their own fault.

ALTERNATIVES TO ADMISSIONS TESTING

The session on alte natives to admissions testing, directed by Donald Ross Green, a research psychologist in the field of standardized assessment, began with the acknowledgement that whenever the demand for higher education exceeds the availability of institutional places, some method of selection is necessary. Green noted that whatever method is used will be, "by definition, unfair to someone at some time in some way." He suggested a wide range of alternatives to standardized aptitude and achievement tests: proportional representation based on race, sex, geography, or some other characteristic; random selection by lottery; cumulative judgments based on interviews, past grades, recommendations, special talents, written applications, past experiences, areas of interest, and other factors; selection of new students by current students, or by alumni, or by faculty, or by an independent agency.

The discussions in the workshop on alternatives to admissions testing were in a sense directed at two basic questions raised in the opening session of the conference by Jean Fairfax of the Legal Defense Fund: If some means of selection is unavoidable, how in a democracy do you sort people without undermining human and constitutional rights—and who should do the sorting? The workshop participants, in identifying some of the criteria upon which selection of college students should be based (among them fairness, equity, and benefit to society), also noted two ostensible and apparently conflicting criteria: benefit to the individual student, and benefit to the institution in which he or she enrolls. The earlier remarks of Benjamin Payton and Alexander Astin reinforced the conclusion reached by the workshop participants, the essence of which was this: public policy (and by extension, institutional policy) is indeed geared to the advancement of individuals and not groups of people, as Payton asserted, and the individuals favored by the institutions in the selection process are by and large the ones who, in Astin's words, will "enhance the prestige of the institution." Consequently, standardized admissions tests remain the most widely used single instrument for deciding who will attend the selective institutions, and because benefit to the institution is the paramount consideration, benefit to individuals is

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—James Blackwell

restricted to a select few, and benefit to particular groups (and perhaps to the society at large) is given the lowest priority.

Finally, one further insight was provided by the discussion of standardized testing. The emphasis has been upon assessing the student and what he or she has learned prior to admission; little or no attention is given to growth in learning as a result of the college experience (Astin's value-added concept), and virtually no assessment is made of the institution itself, and what its faculty and academic programs have contributed to the student's intellectual growth. The implication of standardized testing is that the individual student, and not the institution or its faculty, is solely accountable for learning. The inherent inequity therein is a principal concern of those who oppose the use of tests as a means of determining who goes to college—and where.

ACCESS TO GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

In addition to directing the workshop discussion on retention and attrition, James Blackwell also presented a detailed report on an area of concern in which surprisingly little research has been done: the access of black students to graduate and professional schools.

Blackwell's point of departure was a historical summary of court action resulting in token desegregation of graduate and professional schools in the Southern and border states between 1938 and 1963, and an explication of continuing tokenism in the professional schools of some Northern and Western institutions. (The University of California at Los Angeles, for example, did not graduate its first black doctor until 1970 or its first black dentist until 1974, and the Medical School of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts did not enroll its first black medical student until 1974.) A "pattern of benign quotas of blacks" still exists at the post-baccalaureate levels in many fields and in all parts of the country, Blackwell asserted, and "sophisticated strategies [*of*] bigotry [*and*] racism" limit black admission to predominantly white graduate and professional schools while at the same time threatening to destroy the formerly all-black institutions. One consequence of the prolonged inaccessibility of blacks to advanced training is "the severe shortage of human resources and manpower in many areas requiring sophisticated training and certification." He cited several examples of the shortage of blacks in the professions:

1. Only 5.7 percent of all professional and technical workers in the United States are black;

2. Only about 2 percent of the nation's 380,000 physicians are black, and 90 percent of them are graduates of Howard and Meharry, the only two predominantly black medical schools in the country;

3. Black students enrolled in predominantly white colleges of pharmacy comprise less than 1 percent of all pharmacy students in the nation, and more black pharmacy students are being trained at predominantly black Xavier and Texas Southern universities than in all the predominantly white schools of pharmacy combined;

4. There is a severe under-representation of blacks in the fields of accounting, marketing, finance, and general business administration, and no more than 2 percent of the Ph.D.'s, in economics are black;

5. Of the approximately 70,000 engineers graduating at the bachelor's master's and doctor's levels each year, only about 500 are black, and only a relative handful of them are receiving doctoral degrees;

6. Almost 60 percent of all black doctoral recipients in 1973 were in the field of education;

7. In 1973, only 2 percent of the more than 33,000 Ph.D. recipients were black;

8. In the first three years of this decade, only eight-tenths of 1 percent of the doctoral degrees awarded in the sciences and engineering went to blacks;

9. Of approximately 325,000 lawyers in the United States, only about 3,800—just over 1 percent—are black.

These statistics show that the number of blacks who now hold doctorates and professional degrees is minuscule in comparison to the total number of such persons in the United States, and in spite of some well-publicized efforts to change the picture since the late 1960s, the percentage of black graduate and professional-school students is still far below the percentage of black undergraduates, and farther still below the percentage of blacks in the nation's population. In his paper, Blackwell examined programs of recruitment, admission, and financial assistance for blacks pursuing advanced de-

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—James Blackwell

grees, and found overall a patchwork pattern of contrasts: support from a number of foundations, professional associations, and institutions, on the one hand, and resistance in the form of limited commitments, exclusionary policies, personal and institutional racism, and elitist practices on the other. "Admissions criteria are being adjusted in order to facilitate the admission of a larger number of blacks and other minorities to graduate and professional schools," he concluded, and the actual number of non-whites being admitted is increasing, but the percentage gaps have not narrowed significantly.

Focusing on the 10 states initially included in the *Adams* litigation, Blackwell showed that they enrolled, collectively, about 1,800 more black graduate students in 1972 than in 1970 (the increase was from roughly 6 percent to 7 percent), but he noted "a persistent pattern of graduate school segregation or containment," with the traditionally black institutions enrolling the greater share of black students, even though their graduate programs are more limited. For the nation as a whole, a 1973 survey of two-thirds of all Ph.D.-granting institutions showed their total graduate enrollment to be only 4.4 percent black. And in professional schools, the changes have been equally slight. In medical schools, for example, the percentage of blacks in first-year classes increased from 4.2 in 1969 to 6.1 in 1970, and to 7.1 in 1971; but in the three years since then, the percentage of blacks has increased only four-tenths of 1 percent.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASING MINORITY ACCESS TO GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

Blackwell presented several recommendations for increasing access to graduate and professional schools for blacks and other minorities, including the following:

1. More vigorous enforcement of federal laws and court decisions concerning equal opportunity in higher education;

2. Accelerated recruitment of minorities for graduate and professional schools;

3. Increased financial assistance based on both need and merit;

4. Concentrated recruitment of blacks and other minorities in medicine, dentistry, law, the sciences, and other fields in which minority

representation is critically low;

5. Intensive counseling and supportive services to allow more minority students to be fully competitive with other students in graduate and professional schools;

6. A major research effort to determine the comparative effects upon minorities and whites of retention and attrition, certifying examinations in the professions, and employment at all levels of graduate and professional-school education.

ACCESS TO PRIVATE EDUCATION

Another access issue—equitable participation of blacks in the private sector of American higher education—was the principal focus of an address by Norman Francis, President of Xavier University in New Orleans. Referring to the need for specific national policies regarding the education of minorities, the role of historically black institutions, and the role of non-public colleges and universities, Francis argued that all three of those concerns are bound together by a larger issue: the responsibility of government to assist independent higher education institutions.

Public support for private colleges, he noted, dates back to colonial grants to Harvard in the 17th century. The beginning of taxpayer support of higher education on a large scale was not until 1862, and as recently as 1951, about half of the nation's college students were in non-public institutions. But in the South today, less than 20 percent of all undergraduates are in private colleges, and Francis cited that decline to say that the future of private higher education is endangered. He said government policies designed to sustain private activities in such fields as agriculture, business and health care are also being applied in the field of higher education—41 states provide some form of direct or indirect aid to private colleges—and he advocated continued and increased public support of private institutions in recognition of the reality that public institutions alone cannot meet the national demand for higher education. If the 1,500 private colleges in the United States were to disappear, he said, the responsibility for educating their 2.1 million students would pass to the public sector, and the cost would be prohibitively expensive.

Turning specifically to the needs of blacks and other minorities, Francis noted that 95 percent of all black students in the private colleges

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and universities of the South are in the traditionally black institutions, and about 70 percent of all undergraduate degrees awarded to blacks in the United States are granted by private and public black institutions. For blacks, he added, "there would be no equal educational opportunity in the private sector if there were no black private colleges."

Francis called on the federal and state governments to provide not only individual student financial aid to those who attend private colleges, but also institutional financial aid to black private colleges to help compensate for the 50 percent of their costs not covered by student tuition. "Put rather simply," he said, "I would submit that unless this type of institutional aid is forthcoming, these colleges and their unique service will disappear. And if the enrollment profiles that we have enumerated are any indication of minority access and choice in other institutions, there will be few if any blacks in private education in the coming decade."

Emphasizing his point that student financial aid alone will not be sufficient to guarantee the survival of the private black colleges, Francis advocated continuation with increased funding of the federal program for developing institutions (Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965) and full implementation of a federal cost-of-education allowance to private institutions. "The value to this nation of [historically black private] institutions now and in the future," he concluded, "is too great to have them suffer from 'benign neglect' or any misguided supposition that either they don't need assistance or their contribution to higher education has run its course."

The single most overriding concern of the speakers and participants at the Conference on Equality of Access was the matter of financing higher education for blacks and other minorities. In every session—whether the particular issue under discussion was open admissions, testing, retention, graduate enrollment, or some other aspect of the larger problem of equal opportunity in higher education—the conversation turned eventually and inevitably to the matter of economics. Appropriately, most of one entire conference day was devoted to that subject, and five speakers addressed themselves to various apsects of the finance issue.

A DEBATE: HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

In a panel discussion of questions concerning higher education finance and equal opportunity, Carol Van Alstyne, chief economist for the American Council on Education, and Watts Hill, a North Carolina businessman who has served on a number of higher education boards and commissions, made some observations about the distribution of public resources in higher education.

Van Alstyne said the stated national commitment to equal minority participation in higher education has been more rhetorical than real, and the gap between white and black participation rates has closed very slowly, if at all. She described the debate that has developed between advocates of higher public-institution tuition (with the increased revenues devoted to aid for low-income students) and advocates of continued low tuition, and noted that while both groups agree on the need to increase total support for higher education and to increase access for low-income and minority students, they disagree sharply on three issues:

1. How proposed increases in tuition and simultaneous increases in aid for low-income and minority students would affect enrollments across all income levels;
2. Where in our economic system the funds for student assistance ought to come from;
3. Whether the higher education community should make an appeal for additional public resources to compensate for inequities affecting minorities and the poor, or try instead to achieve the objective of equity within the existing amounts budgeted for higher education at the state and federal levels.

In response to the first issue, Van Alstyne argued that increasing tuition in order to generate more student aid might have adverse effects at both ends of the income spectrum as far as blacks are concerned; the effects of inflation and the expansion of aid to new groups of students and to students higher up the income scale could offset whatever theoretical increases might be intended for blacks at all income levels. As for where the funds for student aid should come from, she asserted that compensating for low income is a social goal, not simply an educational one, and should be supported

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by the economic system as a whole, rather than taken from the higher education budget in the form of increased tuition. And in that same vein, she responded to the third issue: "On the issue of the political feasibility of finding additional resources, those favoring higher tuition argue that, however justified the claims for greater resources, no more resources are to be found in this era of limited resources and competing demands. . . . I argue that before accepting that proposition, higher education first has to try to do a much better job of advocacy in the political domain." Instead of pitting the private sector against the public sector and middle-income families against low-income families, she said, an effort must be made to broaden the coalition in support of higher education and to portray the entire network of institutions not just as resource consumers but also as resource producers.

The weight of Van Alstyne's argument was that increased access and equity in higher education might not necessarily result from tuition increases earmarked for student aid, and that the higher education community must make a persuasive and compelling appeal for expanded public expenditures, because the alternative — redistribution of the current education budget — will neither meet the needs of higher education nor support the objective of equal access.

Watts Hill approached the issue of financing higher education from a different perspective. Currently, he said, public resources are directed almost exclusively to public institutions, where they are used primarily to subsidize the difference between what students pay for education and what education actually costs—tax dollars, in other words, are a tuition subsidy, a form of financial aid to students dispensed without regard to need. If public resources devoted to all postsecondary education below the graduate level were directed primarily to student financial aid based on need, the effect would be to redistribute funds away from those who can afford higher education and toward those who cannot, and the goal of equitable minority participation would be served. In effect, Hill advocated a kind of need-based student voucher, giving each student the latitude to choose a higher education institution in the open market; each institution, public and private, would then rise or fall on its ability to attract and retain a student body in competition with all other institutions.

Whereas Van Alstyne rejected the argument that limited resources and competing demands preclude the

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—Granville Sawyer

possibility of increased public expenditures for higher education in the near future, Hill implied that increased revenues are indeed unlikely, and that redistribution of existing funds will be necessary. He asserted that the competition for scarce resources is as often within the higher education community as it is between higher education and other institutions seeking to serve the public interest, and he was critical of these "institutional interests" that tend to obscure the public interest. "There is no effective organization which seeks to monitor higher education finance and equal opportunity for minorities—or even for students as a whole," he said. "Minority educators, like their majority counterparts, tend to be institutionally oriented. No one speaks effectively for the poor, for minorities, for students and for taxpayers."

Hill's primary suggestion in the area of improving educational finance and equalizing educational opportunity was for the establishment of comprehensive, statewide, need-based programs of financial assistance to students at public and non-public institutions. The Southern states, he said, could institute such programs by:

1. Establishing independent agencies—independent of all educational institutions—to administer the receipt and distribution of funds according to accepted procedures and criteria;

2. Funding the enterprises through increased tuition at public institutions (to one-half of actual educational costs) and the sale of revenue bonds to support student loans;

3. Meeting the first $500 of each student's annual need with an income-contingent, guaranteed loan, and meeting all remaining needs with a direct grant to the student.

The third member of the panel discussing equal opportunity and educational finance, President Granville Sawyer of Texas Southern University, said the recent shift in educational funding from institutional support to individual support is likely to continue, and added that "on the face of it, individual subsidies make good sense." But he also asserted that a strong case can be made for more complementary institutional support, particularly for the traditionally black colleges, whose contribution to the national welfare has been substantial out of all proportion to their size and their resources.

Noting the importance of adequate financial support for academic

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institutions, Sawyer was nonetheless critical of the higher educational community for its scholarly detachment from contemporary social problems, its insistence on financial support in the absence of clearly stated purposes, its tendency to pursue funds without regard to their compatibility with institutional objectives, and their "mantle of obsolescence and orthodoxy" in the face of contemporary national and global crises.

On the question of deciding which of the alternative financial aid programs for students should be followed, Sawyer spoke philosophically. The more fundamental question, he said, is, "What does America want or expect of its young? Despite the mouthings of vague nationalistic polemics, a realistic answer to the question is yet to be found. . . . No student financial assistance program can be truly viable—in the sense of relating personal aspirations and national goals—until the place of young people in American democracy has been more carefully delineated." The federal government, he said, has spent about $3 billion for various kinds of student financial aid in the past five years, but even if three times as much were spent in the next five years, the investment would still be far below the cost of a single sophisticated weapons system such as the F-16 aircraft. He added: "I am less concerned here about costs —because we can buy whatever we decide is necessary—than I am concerned about priorities."

Priorities and their philosophical basis were also a concern of another conference speaker — Patricia S. Fleming, a member of the staff of Georgia Congressman Andrew Young. Her subject was the Education Amendments of 1972, the package of student financial aid programs enacted by Congress to help equalize higher educational opportunity for low-income and minority-group students. The creation of those programs was an anomaly, she said, coming as it did at a time when the mood of the country was shifting away from concern with the problems of poverty and discrimination. Nevertheless, the aid programs — Basic Educational Opportunity Grants (BEOG), Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), State Student Incentive Grants (SSIG), College Work-Study (CWS), and the student loan programs—have begun to serve the purposes for which they were intended, and in Fleming's view, should be continued and expanded, with some modifications.

Authorization for the programs

will expire at the end of next June, and a House of Representatives subcommittee headed by James O'Hara of Michigan is now considering a large number of alterations in the programs. The basic working document upon which the reauthorization discussions are proceeding is a bill introduced by O'Hara which would redefine equal educational opportunity in a way that would be disadvantageous to minorities and low-income people.

Fleming said O'Hara's concept of equal educational opportunity is "universal access to education for any person, at any level, at any time of life," tax-supported and free of any direct charges to the individual. On the face of it, such a comprehensive plan might appear equitable, but Fleming noted that the effect of it would be to channel most young people — particularly those with limited means—into low-cost institutions, and do nothing further to erase the cumulative and persisting effects of discrimination and poverty. Said Fleming:

He [O'Hara] asked a black witness at the student aid hearings which of the following two alternatives he would select if he had the choice: to increase total college enrollment with proportions of minority and white students remaining the same as they are now, but having a larger number of blacks, as well as whites, in higher education; or to increase the proportion of minority students to reach a larger number as well as a larger percentage of black students.

Of course, the witness chose the second alternative. Jim O'Hara chose the first. This points out the major difference in our definitions of equal educational opportunity.

At every income level, black students are underrepresented in the college population, Fleming said; for example, 59 percent of white families earning $15,000 or more in 1970 sent children to college, compared to 39 percent of black families in the same income bracket. Aid programs which disregard race and socio-economic class, she said, would lock in the present inequitable patterns of underrepresentation and assure the continued advantage now enjoyed by white middle- and upper-income students.

Fleming cited several features of the O'Hara proposal that would shift the emphasis from need to merit (presumably based upon test scores) and from particular students with identified needs to most or all students, regardless of need. The O'Hara bill has prompted "some cause for alarm among advocates of greater minority participation in postsecondary education," she said, "but there is still cause for hope"—other members of the House Committee on Education and Labor besides O'Hara have a special interest in the reauthorization bill, and a consensus among them "may result in a bipartisan effort to reinforce and expand the equal opportunity thrust of current student aid programs."

The final speaker on financial issues, Jerry S. Davis of Brookdale Associates in California, focused his remarks on student aid programs in the Southern states. Davis said that of the four principal barriers to postsecondary education—academic, attitudinal, geographic, and financial —the financial barrier is the easiest to describe, document, and deal

with. It can be removed by providing a student and his family with increased resources to pay the costs of education, and removal will produce definite benefits; Davis estimated that 10 to 15 percent of all high school graduates in the Southern states have the potential, the desire, and the credentials—but not the financial resources—to go to college, and thus do not go, and another 10 to 25 percent who do enroll find their choices of institutions and educational experiences substantially limited by their lack of funds. At a bare minimum, he said, financial barriers in the South "significantly and negatively influence the postsecondary activities or choices of at least one-third of all high school graduates at some point or another," and "it is almost a certainty that the underutilization of all these resources represents a far greater cost to everyone than the cost of removing the financial barrier."

Davis noted that removing the barrier can be done either by reducing institutional charges or increasing individual resources. He made his own preference clear: "I believe that policy recommendations regarding manipulations of or reductions in tuitions without corresponding changes in financial aid will have very limited impact on the needs of low-income students. Therefore, I believe our efforts to remove the financial barrier to postsecondary education should focus on financial aid." Increasing the cost of tuition as a means of generating new funds for need-based student aid programs will not work in the South, he speculated, because there are more needy than non-needy students in the region, higher tuitions might drive the most affluent students to private or non-Southern institutions, and such a practice would not be a politically tenable solution in any event.

Concluding that direct financial aid to students is the best means of removing the economic barrier to higher education, Davis advocated development in every Southern state of a comprehensive, need-based grant program providing awards directly to students, based upon standardized and equitable measurements of reimbursable costs and individual student ability to pay them. He also urged every state to develop and expand guaranteed loan agencies, to discontinue all categorical aid programs based on criteria other than need, and to design grants and loans to students in such a way that they will supplement and complement aid from other sources.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

The multitude of complex and interrelated issues and interests involved in the search for equality of opportunity in higher education inevitably raises some difficult questions, particularly in a period of limited economic growth. The Conference on Equality of Access in Postsecondary Education brought together in a single forum many of those competing interests. The positions taken and the points of view expressed were not always in perfect harmony, but a clear consensus emerged on a number of basic points, and they were spelled out in a series of resolutions and recommendations adopted by the participants.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

In the area of higher education fi-

nance, the conferees urged:

1. Special funding to correct historic inequities in colleges and universities serving predominantly black populations.

2. Development and expansion of comprehensive, need-based grant programs for student aid at the undergraduate level in all institutions.

3. Further development and expansion of guaranteed loan agencies.

4. Maintenance of a level of institutional appropriations necessary to prevent increases in tuition.

5. Recognition of the necessity of a federal-state partnership in financing student aid on the basis of objectively-determined need rather than subjectively-measured merit, and in particular, full and equitable implementation of all existing federally-funded grant and loan programs.

OPEN ADMISSIONS

Concerning open admissions, the conference participants recommended:

1. Development of comprehensive plans for the delivery of educational services to students, including appropriate learning resources, all necessary supportive services, and relevant evaluative measures.

2. Granting of college credit, as a built-in motivational factor, for all remedial and developmental courses.

3. Special emphasis on student needs in the areas of financial aid, tutoring, communications skills, and personal, academic, and occupational counseling.

ALTERNATIVES TO ADMISSIONS TESTING

Resolutions on the subject of alternatives to admissions testing called for:

1. Use of open admissions (requiring a high school record or equivalent experiences) as *the* single most equitable alternative to admissions testing.

2. Use of proportional representation (based on such characteristics as race, sex, and geography), random selection (lottery), and weighted information (interviews, past grades, work experience, recommendations, and the like) as preferable alternatives to admissions testing in institutions having more applicants than available places.

RECRUITMENT

On the subject of recruitment, the conference participants recommended a variety of specific actions by higher education systems and institutions, to the end that blacks and other minorities would be attracted in proportionately representative numbers to all undergraduate, graduate and professional schools. Mentioned in particular were the development of comprehensive, widely disseminated, and specific forms of information for potential students, and wide use of local and national media resources to reach them. The resolutions also called for a special effort to assure nondiscriminatory treatment of minorities by counselors, a concentration on recruitment of transfer students into upper-division, graduate, and professional-

school programs, and an assurance against disproportionate channeling of minorities into schools other than four-year, degree-granting institutions.

COMPLETION OF DEGREE PROGRAMS

Toward the goal of maximum completion of degree programs by minorities, the conferees urged:

1. Specific directives from governing boards to the colleges and universities they oversee, requiring that retention of enrolled students be given a high priority, and that the necessary research and monitoring programs be established to assure the highest possible number of students who enroll in degree programs actually complete them.

2. Development of service-oriented educational delivery systems which place upon institutions and their faculties a degree of responsibility for the retention and graduation of their students.

FROM THE FLOOR

In addition to these resolutions, the conference participants introduced from the floor several other statements which were approved by unanimous vote. One called for changes in the makeup of governing boards and their professional support agencies to include sufficient numbers of blacks and other minorities to reflect the presence of those groups in the population served by the boards. Another recommended that each state initiate a crash program of graduate and professional-school training of minorities to meet the system-wide needs of an equitable and proportionate minority presence in the teaching and administrative ranks. A third recommended specific programs of action and support to ensure an equitable and continuing role in higher education for the historically black institutions. A fourth recommended that the use of standardized tests be limited to counseling, guidance, and placement purposes, and that steps be taken to assure nondiscriminatory use of all tests as they are applied to minority groups. And finally, a resolution was passed in support of the federally-funded Title III program for developing institutions.

It would be saying too much to conclude that the Conference on Equality of Access in Postsecondary Education solved the problems or resolved the conflicts surrounding the issue of equal educational opportunity. There will remain, for the foreseeable future, hard decisions to be made respecting public institutions and private ones, traditionally black institutions and predominantly white ones, the *Adams* states and the rest of the nation, and the more-advantaged and less-advantaged people who make up the national population. There will be more debate as well on the relative effects of an expanding economy and a constricting one, and on the differences between color-blind equality and compensation for past inequities. But the participants at the conference, many of whom are involved at the institutional level in the search for equity in higher education, took away with them some new resources to help in the continuation of that search. Their gain was not new answers but next steps. In a time of retrenchment and caution, it was no small gain.